

# Curse of the Misery Chick

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Summary: Daria accidentally boards the bus to a Lawndale football road game.

## Curse of the Misery Chick

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## Curse of the Misery Chick

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Another Daria fanfic by Rey Fox

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\*\*Note: \*\*This is the third story in my little continuity, after "My Dinner With Upchuck," which comes after "Kitsune."

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## CHAPTER 1: Field Trippin'

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"However, it should be made clear that not all areas of the animal kingdom follow this pattern of male dominance. Would anyone like to hear about the common praying mantis?"

Mack raised his hand. "Mrs. Barch, you've already told us about the praying mantis. Twice."

Mrs. Barch was unfazed. "And I will keep telling you about it until you get the point! And by the way, Mack, don't expect any preferential treatment in this class just because your Testosterone Brigade is in the playoffs!"

"Why, Mrs. Barch," Mack said with feigned innocence, "I wouldn't dream of it!"

"Good." And with that, she launched into her third graphic retelling of the mating habits of the praying mantis. Daria stared forward with her chin in her hand and her elbow on the desk. Biology was good for a laugh or two, but there was no one to listen to her sarcastic remarks.

Soon came that magical time of three minutes before the lunch bell, when everybody would begin gathering their stuff and the teacher would have to raise her voice to keep the students' attention.

"Don't forget about the field trip after lunch. I trust you've all had this cleared with your fifth period teachers?"

Daria snapped her fingers. She had forgotten all about that aspect.

At one minute before the bell, the students had already formed a group by the door.

"Man, I am psyched!" said Kevin, "I get out of class early for a field trip, and I get out of class early for the football game!"

"Kevin," said Mack, "You can only get out of class for one thing at a time."

Kevin paused as this registered in his mind. "Yeah. I know. Playoffs."

"Just don't get on the wrong bus, that's all I ask."

"Whatever you say, Mack Daddy."

"Don't callâ€|ah, forget it."

"Forget what, Mack Daddy?"

\*\*\*\*

"Field trip, huh? Lucky, lucky you," said Jane as she raised her cafeteria burger to her mouth. "Where to?"

"Some genetics lab in Oakdale."

"Really?" said Jane through a mouthful of ground beef, "They gonna let you see the Reject Room?"

"One can hope."

"Well if so, be sure to get some pictures. I could use the subject matter."

"I'll make a note of it. Anyway, I gotta leave here early. I need to go clear this absence with the office so that the guards won't shoot me when I step over The Line."

"And so that they can put the tracking implant in your inner ear."

"Right."

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Naturally, however, the secretary wasn't there. The student office aide told Daria that she was getting lunch, and should be back shortly. So naturally, twenty minutes passed before the secretary came back, and informed Daria that a sheet with the list of students going on Mrs. Barch's field trip had already been sent to all the teachers. Daria left the office cursing under her breath. She cursed again when she realized that she had left her back pack in her locker. She got it, went outside, and cursed over her breath when she saw the one bus in the front drive was shutting its door. She broke out into a sprint and caught the bus as it started moving. The bus driver opened the door and let her in.

"Yer gonna wanna be a little earlier next time, hon!" said the bus driver in that annoying tone that bus drivers like to use.

"Thanks for the tip," Daria grumbled. She scanned around the bus for an empty seat, and found one near the front. She plopped down on it, thankful for the opportunity to sit down and pant after her run.

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CHAPTER 2: The Wayward Bus (A Steinbeck novel that I read in high school, didn't particularly like it. Huh? Oh yeah, back to the story)

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"HI, Daria!" said a squeaky voice to Daria's right. Daria turned to see Brittany Taylor, who had been hidden from view because she was bent over tying her shoes.

Daria suppressed a sigh. "Um, hi, Brittany."

"Are you ready for the big game?!"

"As ready as I'll ever be," Daria said in her typical monotone, a fact which flew right over Brittany's head.

"Everybody says that we're like, Underdogs, but I just love that show so I \_know\_ we're going to win! Are you going to be cheering us on?"

"Of course. You'll just have to forgive me for leaving my giant foam 'We're #1' finger at home."

"That's okay, you can borrow mine!"

"â€|"

Minutes later, it began to dawn on Daria that the people on the bus were a little too noisy and enthusiastic to be going on a science field trip. Upon looking back, she also noticed all the garment bags piled in the back two seats. This didn't particularly bother her until the bus got on the interstate in the westbound lane.

"Um, wait a minute, isn't Oakdale in the \_other\_ direction?"

"Ummm, I \_think\_ so," answered Brittany.

"Soooo, shouldn't we be \_going\_ in the other direction?"

"Ummm, I don't \_think\_ so."

"Well, what \_do\_ you think?"

"Ummmâ€¦!"

"Okay, new line of questioning: does this bus driver know where Oakdale is?"

"Why do you keep mentioning Oakdale?"

Daria gritted her teeth. "Becaaaaause that's where we're going."

"No, we're not."

"Yes we are, we're going to Oakdale on a field trip."

"Maybe you're going to Oakdale, but \_I'm\_ going to the playoff game! And so are the other cheerleaders on this bus, and the band people on this bus, and-"

"So the conclusion that we've finally arrived at is that this bus is not going to Oakdale, but rather, to a football game?"

"Uh, I \_think\_ so."

"Would you mind too much if I were to scream now?"

"Cool! We could start a cheer!" Daria instead put her head down on the seat in front of her. After breathing a few times, she said, "Okay, so where is this football game?"

"We're playing at Fairfield High! They're ranked third in the state, but we're ranked sixth, so I just \_know\_ we're gonna win!"

Daria ignored Brittany's faulty logic for the time being. "Isn't that a long way away?"

"Um, about five hours on the bus, why?"

Daria just put her head down again, then got up and made her way to the front of the bus, swaying with the bus' motion.

"Whatter ya doin' out of yer seat, hon?" asked the bus driver. There's that tone again, thought Daria, who was also resenting how every bus driver and cafeteria cook was required to call people "Hon."

"Uh, I just realized that I'm on the wrong bus."

"Well, shoulda brought that to my attention before I got on the interstate!"

"Yeah, well it's a little too late for that now, isn't it? Anyway, could you maybe let me off at the next exit?"  
> "Sorry, hon, got orders from the coaches to get all these folks to the hotel by 5:30 so they can get to practice and all that. No stops."<p>

"Not even to let one person off?"

"'Fraid not."

"You're kidding."

"Do I \_sound \_like I'm kidding?! Now git back to your seat!"

Daria swayed back to her seat and sat down heavily. Well, I suppose things could be worse, she thought. I could be on the football team bus.

\*\*\*\*

"WOOOO!!!! All the way, taking state, WOOOO!!!!"

"Uh, Kevin, it gets a bit old after a half an hour."

"Sorry, Mack Daddy, I'm just tryin' to you know, keep spirits high so we can KICK SOME FAIRFIELD ASS!!! WOOOO!!!!!"

"Okay, but lets go over the playbook again."

"Dude, I read the playbook, I know what's going on."

"Let's just review." Mack turned to page 14.

"Yeah, I know, three step drop, fake handoff, and hit that Jeremy guy on a crossing pattern."

"His name is Jamie, remember? He's our best reciever."

"Yeah, I knew it was something with a J."

"Now take a look at page 25."

"Okay, Mack Daddy." He flipped to page 25. "Hey, there's no play here."

"Just read what it says."

"Uh, 'Don'tâ€|callâ€|meâ€|Mackâ€|Daddy.' Dude, you don't have to write it down, Mack Daddy, I can remember."

"Well just to be sure, read it a few more times."

"Okay."

\*\*\*\*

An hour and a half later, Daria was beginning to look wistfully at the little red handle to detach her window as an emergency exit.

"So like, I was thinking we need to try to get some male cheerleaders next year so we could be like, equal," said Brittany to the girls in the seat behind her.

"I don't know," said the first one, a brunette, "Like when we'd make a pyramid, it's like, you'd just \_know\_ that they're looking up your skirt."

"Yeah," said the second, a taller girl with dirty blonde hair, "but like, if we had some guys, we could get more height on our throws! That's where Oakdale beat us last year in the cheerleader contest."

They probably did better in the Q & A too, thought Daria, as she forced herself to take her hand off the handle. Hitting the asphalt from a bus going 50 is probably a lot more painful in real life than it is in the movies, she reflected.

"I think we should get those pom-poms with like, blue \_and\_ yellow threads in them," bubbled Anonymous Cheerleader #1.

"Ugh, no way," said #2, "From far away, those look like, \_green\_."

"Ewww!" agreed Brittany.

"Besides," continued #2, "It's not yellow, it's \_gold\_."

"Uh-uh! Gold is like, shiny, our dresses and pompoms are yellow."

"Look in the book! Our school colors are blue and gold, \_period\_."

If I were to vomit now, though Daria, would it be yellow or gold?

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Meanwhile, on the football bus, Kevin was having a quiet conversation.

"So have you got the connection, Justin?"

Justin Barnes, the star running back narrowed his eyes at Kevin. "Yeah, dude, I got the connection. Trust me, we'll have plenty of celebration fuel for tonight."

"Yeah, if we win," Mack grumbled.

"We'll win! And if we don't then we can like, drown our sorrows."

"I still don't think this is a good idea. I mean, we're on a school trip! If we get caught with booze, we could get suspended!"

"Dude," said Justin, "No one's gonna suspend us! We're the heroes of the school, out to bring honor to \_Laaawndale High\_! Besides, Coach's probably gonna be staying in one of those like penthouse suites anyway."

"Well just remember that as team captain, I'm at least somewhat responsible for all your asses. Don't make me look bad."

"Aye aye, Captain Mack Daddy."

"Dammit!"

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\*\*CHAPTER 3: Arrival\*\*

Three hours later, Daria and Brittany were both asleep and sliding towards each other. They both let out a yelp as their heads collided in cartoon fashion. Daria groaned at being dragged back into reality and Brittany looked out the window just in time to see the "Fairfield: Next Three Exits" sign.

"Daria, wake up!!"

"Already didâ€¦|didn't like itâ€¦|"

"We made it, Daria, we made it!!"

"Yeahâ€¦|bus didn't run off the road or detour to Tijuana, what a miracle."

"Soon we'll be cheering our team on to \_victory\_!"

"Why do you keep saying 'we'?"

"Oh, well, you won't be on the field with the professionals, but you can still give your support from the stands!!"

"I think maybe I'll phone it in instead."

\*\*\*\*

Upon arrival at the hotel, Daria headed for the nearest pay phone in the lobby. She remembered that Helen was at a lawyer convention in Leeville, and would be unavailable to drive her home. This left Jake, which held its risks. She dialed the number, and the phone rang once, and rang again for only a split second before Jake picked up the phone.

"Morgendorfferconsulting?" said Jake's semi-frenzied voice.

"Uh, Dad?"

There was a brief pause as Jake slipped out of Business Mode. "Oh, HI, kiddo! Great to hear from you! You need fatherly advice? 'Cause if so, I'm the man for the job!"

"Uh, not quite. I need a favor."

"Favor? Is Ms. Li stifling your creativity again? Because if so, by God I'll-"

"No, that's not it. See, I'm supposed to be on a field trip, but I accidentally got on the wrong bus, and now I'm stuck in Fairfield."

"Fairfield? That's all the way across the state! Didn't you know which bus to get on?"

"I was running late, and there was only one bus out front, and it was leaving, and I got on, and it turned out to be the one carrying the cheerleaders and the band to the football game. Look, it was stupid, I know, could you please give me a ride home?"

"Gee, kiddo, I have a very important dinner meeting with a client tonight! I'm sorry, uh, you could watch the game, that would be fun, right?"

"That would be a genuine blast, Dad."

Just then, Brittany happened by on the way to practice and shouted, "See you at the game, Daria!" Daria finally decided to break it to her.

"I'm not going to the game, Brittany."

"Why not?" asked Brittany, crestfallen.

"I'm just not a big football fan. In fact, I'm trying to get home now, but I can't get a ride."

"Well if you're stuck here, then you might as well go! It would be better than sitting around here. Hey, are you going to have to stay overnight? I just remembered that Stephanie got mono and couldn't make it. You could share \_my\_ room!"

Well, at least that would be cost-effective, thought Daria. She put the phone back to her mouth. "Uh, Dad? I got lodging with Brittany Taylor if you can't make it. At the Best Western in Fairfield."

"Uh, okay, kiddo, have fun! I'll make this up some day, I promise."

"Of course you will. Bye." Daria hung the phone up and kicked the wall. She got her hotel key from Brittany, and headed up to her room for some face-down bed meditation.

Across the lobby, a red-haired girl caught Daria out of the corner of her eye just before Daria entered the elevator. She thought that the girl looked familiar, but couldn't get a good enough look to know from where she knew her. She put it out of her mind and went up the stairs.

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#### CHAPTER 4: FOO-BALL!

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Three hours later, Daria was huddled against the cold November wind on the far right side of the visitors' bleachers at the Fairfield High football stadium, reminding herself for the fourth time never to listen to Brittany again, and for the sixth time to always check her pockets for her keys when leaving a hotel room. The two teams were jogging off the field towards the locker room for halftime. The



Lawndale team was in particularly high spirits because of the touchdown they had scored a few minutes ago that had given them the momentum in the game despite being down 16-10. The cheerleaders were heading up into the bleachers while the Fairfield band came out for the halftime performance. Daria saw Brittany coming her way, and tried to ignore her, but it didn't work.

"Daria! Aren't you glad you came?"

"Indeed. I had no idea that big guys in pads running into each other could be so entertaining."

"Did you see that last touchdown? Justin Barnes ran forty yards! He is so talented, but not as talented and wonderful as my Kevvie, of course!"

"Mm."

"Come on, Daria, SMILE! You know, just because you're a brain and all, doesn't mean you can't have fun!"

Daria pulled up the corners of her mouth with her fingers.

"That's the spirit!" squeaked Brittany. She then ran off with the other cheerleaders.

Sometimes she just leaves me speechless, thought Daria.

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Back in Lawndale, Jake Morgendorffer shifted uneasily in his seat at the Chez Pierre. He kept one ear on his client while his other ear was tuned to his troubled thoughts.

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She's all alone. Stuck in Fairfield. What a dump of a town. And here I am, too busy with work to come to her aid. But this is an important meeting. With an important client. But Daria's more important than any client. Oh come on, she's probably enjoying herself, she's getting out of the house. Oh hell, she hates football! Just like I did when Dad made me go out for the football team. Gonna make a man out of little Jakey, by crushing the boy! Well I'm not going to continue that legacy! We Morgendorffers don't have to be trapped by these ridiculous notions of manhood! You hear that, Dad?! We are—

—

"Mr. Morgendorffer?"

"What?!"

The client was put off briefly by Jake's outburst, but recovered. "So what do you think about this idea?"

"It's no good!"

"But Mr. Morgendorffer, you said—"

"Never mind what I said! That was the corporate zombie Jake Morgendorffer! The real Jake Morgendorffer is a loving father, whose daughter is stuck in Fairfield with a bunch of football players! I swear, if any of them so much as touched her, I'm gonna-"

"Mr. Morgendorffer, are you feeling all right?"

"I'm better than all right! I know now what's important! I'm gonna save my daughter!!" He leapt out of his seat and took off into the parking lot. He hopped into his Lexus, hit the steering wheel shaft three times with the key before he managed to get it into the starter, and sped off towards the freeway with a triumphant shout:

"HANG ON, KIDDO! DADDY'S COMING!!!!"

And then: "GAH! DAMN OVERSIZED LOAD TRAILERS!"

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The gun sounded, and Lawndale's crowd went wild. Lawndale had come from behind in dramatic fashion to score a touchdown in the final minute to win 27-23. Daria was dimly aware of this as she flipped page 98 of her copy of Fahrenheit 451.

"DARIA!!! WE WON!!!" Brittany, of course. "I knew it! We're the Underdogs! There's no need to fear, the Underdogs are here!!!"

"Oh, good! Can we go back to our room now?"

"We're ALL going back to our room! For a party!!!"

"Terrific."

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CHAPTER 5: Party Like It's This Year

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At the Morgendorffer house, Quinn was dialing an unfamiliar number on the phone. She put it up to her ear and listened to it ring a couple of times before it was answered.

"Yo?" said Jane.

"Um, Jane, this is, uh Quinn, you know, Daria's sister, and I was just wondering if you've seen Daria?"

> "No, I haven't seen her since lunch, actually."<p>

"Ohâ€|well, she's not here, and neither is Mom and Dad, so like, I'm all alone, so I was wondering if you could-"

Jane hung up.

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"Lookee what weeee brought!" Justin Barnes strode into the room with a case of Henry Weinhard's in each of his beefy hands. The

cheerleaders squealed and attacked the case.

"And there's plenty more where that came from! Courtesy of my good friend who just happens to be an alumnist of this ass-kickin' football team!!" continued Justin as a few other football players entered the room. One of them was Kevin.

"Hey Daria, 'sup?" he asked after squirming his way to the back of the room where Daria sat.

"My patience."

"'Ja see us out there? We kicked ASS! I even scored a touchdown!"

"And you didn't even run into the goalpost, impressive."

"Damn right! I look where I'm going!" He then proceeded to trip over Daria's backpack. "Ow! Dude, you shouldn't leave that lying around! I could have like, pulled my hamstring! Or my quads. Wait, which ones do you flex?"

"Sphincter."

"Yeah, that's it. Wanna brew?"

"No thanks. I'm a conscientious objector."

"Oh come on! Wanna know a cool trick? If you don't want to have a hangover in the morning, just drink a lot of soda before going to bed. No wait, that's for the hiccups. Or is it chicken pox?"

"Look, Dr. Kevin, I think I'll just beg off tonight if that's okay."

"Sure, whatever." Kevin climbed over the bed to get to Brittany. Daria sat back and waited for someone to do something stupid.

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"Hey, isn't that that Misery Chick over there? What's she doing here?" asked one of the offensive linemen.

"I dunno. She didn't say," said Kevin.

"Well she better not poop on our party, we kicked way too much ass for that! Isn't she at least going to have a beer?"

"Nah. She said she was like, a conscience rejecter. Must be like, religious or something. Like those Stairway to Heaven guys."

"Figures. Well, screw her."

"What?" said another O-lineman, "You'd have to get me really drunk first!" They all laughed ribaldly.

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An indeterminate amount of time passed, and Daria began to realize that drunk people weren't really that great for entertainment. And the conversation mainly revolved around how drunk various people were, and how drunk they had been on previous occasions, and things they had done while drunk, and etc. etc. ad infinitum. Daria climbed over the bed and elbowed through the throng. She noticed the case sitting on the closet shelf by the door. There was one can left. Daria picked it up, pulled the tab, and sniffed cautiously. Well, into the abyss, she thought, and took a sip. She swallowed hard, and grimaced. It was bitter and sour, sort of like bruised apple, but without even the resemblance to apple to save it. Daria supposed that after three of these, they probably tasted all right. Of course by then, turpentine would also taste all right. Daria put the can down in disgust. What am I trying to do, she thought, fit in? She walked out into the hallway and headed down towards the vending machines. Just then, someone burst from the stairwell and noticed Daria. He was short and built like a running back, but he looked old enough to be a college senior. The founder of the feast, thought Daria.

"Hey there, howsitgoin'?" he slurred.

"It's not," said Daria.

"Well, maybe we can get it going, whaddya say?"

"For starters, how many have \_you \_had?"

"Just enough to put fuel in the ol' love machine. You like football players? I used to play for this team. Casey Adams. Best running back this school has ever known. And I got as many moves \_off\_ the field as I do on."

"I'm sure you do. How about making one in the opposite direction?"

"Oh oh OH, a feisty one, huh? Yeaaaahh, I see! How 'bout you go have a few more, and call me when you wanna get dirty. I got my own place in town, take you away from all these kids."

"Hate to burst your bubble, but I haven't had any. I need to keep my reasoning skills about me if I'm going to be stuck in a hotel full of drunken jocks. And has-been jocks."

"Has-been? Do you fucking know who you're talking to?"

"I know damn well. A supposedly hot-shot running back who has apparently failed to make The Show for all his bragging. You probably don't know who you're talking to, though. And you won't remember it, either. And you would certainly never even come near me if you were sober."

"Yeah? You be a bitch, then, I don't need you! You're gonna wish you weren't such a Misery Chick when I'm givin' someone else what I got! And I got a lot, baby, I got a fucking LOT!" He went back down the stairs.

There it is again, Daria thought, Misery Chick. Do they all get this from MTV or something? Daria cheered up a little. Maybe a goal post will fall on his head now, she thought. So goes the Curse of the Misery Chick. Or maybe he'll just get busted for buying alcohol for

minors.

A little while later, Casey burst out of the stairwell again and rushed past Daria, shooting her a mean glare as he went by on the way to Brittany's room. Well, thought Daria, you'll \_never \_get me in bed now that you're going to be grumpy. She walked to the other end of the hall and the elevator doors opened. Coach Peterson, Mrs. Reeder the cheerleading coach, and the assistant football coaches got out, none of them looking too happy.

"'Scuse me, you're gonna have to go back to your room now," said Coach Peterson.

"Why's that?"

"The police are here. They got reports of some boozing going on here, and we need to search the rooms."

Daria didn't know whether to smile or panic.

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## CHAPTER 6: The Mary Jane Strikes Back

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Out on the interstate, a blue Lexus wove in and out of traffic doing about 80 miles per hour. Its driver, Jake Morgendorffer, displaying the dual vision that only comes after years of white collar work, had one eye on the road, and one eye on his cell phone, on which he was furiously dialing the hotel.

"Come on, come on, pick up!" The phone rang again. "Hey!! It's called a turn signal, use it!!"

"Excuse me?" said the voice on the phone.

"Wha? Oh sorry, I wasn't talking to you. Yeah, hello, could I speak to Daria Morgendorffer, please? She's a guest at your hotel."

"One moment, please." Jake flexed his grip on the steering wheel rhythmically while he waited. "Sorry sir, we have no record of any Daria Morgandoppler here."

"GAH! That's MorgenDORFFer, M-O-R-G-E-N-D-O-R-F-F-E-R!"

"One minute please."

"GAH!"

After some seconds (or hours, depending on whose point of view you're considering), the receptionist came back on. "There's no record of any Mor-gen-dorf-fer here, either."

"AUGH! Wait, who was that girl she was staying withâ€|Ashley, Kimberly, Bigamyâ€|Brittany! Tater, Trailerâ€|Taylor! How about Brittany Taylor?"

"One moment pleaseâ€|Here we are, Brittany Taylor, room 415, I'll put you through."

There was silence, some clicking, and then the phone rang. Then the phone rang again. And again. And again. Finally it was picked up, only to be dropped back down again. The dial tone came on, then began to fade. Jake lowered the phone from his ear and saw the words "Low Batt" on the display.

"GAH GAH DAMMIT!!!"

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And so Daria headed back to her room. Well, I have to go to the bathroom anyway, she thought. She entered and opened the bathroom door, but turned her head to see the hoard of people in her room milling around nervously. Some of them were giving her dirty looks.

"Um, hello?"

There was pause, then Anonymous Cheerleader #1 said, "How could you, Daria?"

"Huh?"

"You know damned well what we're talking about," said the O-lineman, "We're about to get our asses busted, and it's all your fault!"

"Uhâ€|huh. I'm going to the bathroom now."

"Yeah, go ahead and hide, bitch!" The door shut and Daria stared at the mirror. Well now it's hit the fan, she thought, as her stomach twisted in a knot. What now? Well, just remember not to think that things can't get any worse.

Of course, telling one's self that is tantamount to actually thinking it, really. This was proven when the inner door to the toilet part of the bathroom opened and a red-haired girl stepped out. Daria turned to face her, and their eyes met. Recognition was instant.

"You!" she shouted, and quickly sidled past Daria to place herself by the bathroom door. She turned and fixed her golden eyes on Daria.

"And to think I nearly forgot about you," sneered Rachel the kitsune.

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The little bell on the top of the doorframe gave a pathetic little ding as Jake rushed through it. The man behind the counter looked up from his copy of Field & Stream and pushed up the bill of his John Deere cap slightly as the disheveled man in the business suit came up to the counter.

"Well, hi there, what can I do for you?"

"Hithankyou, doyouhaveanycellphonebatteries?!"

"'Scuse me? You'll have to slow down, there,

Mister."

"Gahâ€|argâ€|Doâ€|you haveâ€|any batteriesâ€|for a cellularâ€|phone?"

"Well now, that all depends on what kinda batteries that thing runs on. We got plenty a' Aas and 9-volts on that shelf over there."

"Cell phones don't run on 9-volt batteries!"

"So are you implyin' that it runs on some fancy kinda Cell Phone Battery? Well, we ain't got nothin' like that here."

"Wellâ€|how about a pay phone?"

"Yeah, right out front."

"Thanks!" With that, Jake rushed back out.

The clerk snorted. "Yuppiesâ€|"

Upon jamming a quarter in the slot of the phone and going through the receptionist, Jake waited again for Daria to answer. This time there was just silence.

"Sorry, sir," said the receptionist, "They must have unplugged the phone."

"AAARRRGGGHH!!!!"

\*\*\*\*

Rachel stepped towards Daria, then stopped, and leaned menacingly on the counter as she continued her rant.

"Yep, nearly put you out of my mind. Nearly forgot about how you exposed me in the worst way. Nearly forgot about how you ruined my chances with Trent. In fact, I haven't had any real luck since then! Care to comment?"

Daria's heart was in her throat, but she maintained her cool as best as she could. "Nowâ€|that has nothing to do with me."

"Very possible. But maybe I'll just kill you anyway."

"Butâ€|what would that accomplish?"

"Not much, really. Might make me feel better, though."

"Yeah, but with twenty people in the room outside here? Probably joined by a bunch of coaches? How would you get away with it?"

"Why should I need to?" Daria winced. She had a point there.

"Well, look, you're in the business of seducing young men and sucking their souls, right?"

"Well, something like that. On occasion. So why do you ask?"

"Well look around! You're in a hotel full of drunken jocks! Like a kid in a candy store! Take your pick! I certainly won't stop you."

"Damn right you won't. But how can I be sure?"

"I don't care about these people. Besides, they're howling for my blood anyway."

"Oh, are they?"

"Yeah, they think I spoiled their little party by ratting on them. I'll bet they didn't need my help though."

"How sad. But tell me, Daria, are you just trying to play on my sympathies? Because that's not a very wise tactic." She looked Daria right in the eyes as she said this. Daria could feel those elliptical pupils boring into her.

"Well, maybe a little," she said, "But it's true." Rachel relaxed her gaze. Daria was telling the truth; Rachel could smell it if she was lying.

"Again, how sad. Still, you might be Little Miss Noble, and I can't have that. I have my own interests to look after. Namely, survival."

"I did what I did that night because I care about Trent. He's a talented and caring person, and a good friend."

"And he's your crush, don't forget that."

"Sheesh, first Andrea, now you. Why don't I just put it on a billboard?"

"Because that would show that you have feelings, maybe."

"Since when did you know me so well?"

"I have my ways. Ah yes, human love is quite touching, really. Then I'm reminded of how foolish people are. Take this football game for instance."

"Amen. Just be glad that you don't have to go to Lawndale High. These guys here are Lawndale's most valued asset."

"Oh don't worry, I've seen my fair share of human stupidity."

"I suppose being a supernatural being would make you an authority on that."

"Yeah, it does, actually."

Just then the door opened a crack, and Mrs. Reeder looked in. "What's going on in here?" she asked, as if she suspected them of smoking pot in the bathroom.

"Um, nothing, Mrs. Reeder," said Daria.

"Well, you girls are going to have to go back to your rooms



now."

Daria sidled past Rachel at the opportunity. "This is my room, Mrs. Reeder. Ask Brittany. Brittany gave a small nod from where she was sitting.

"Okay, well, you'll have to leave now, young lady."

"Whatever," said Rachel, "See ya round, Daria."

"Umâ€¦bye, I guess." She left along with Mrs. Reeder, the football coaches, and the other cheerleaders and football players, leaving Daria alone with Brittany and her troubles. Having her life spared felt nice, though.

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## CHAPTER 7: The Pariah Chick

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"You know Rachel?" squeaked Brittany once the door closed.

"Um, we've been acquainted, yeah."

"Ooh, I hate her! She tried to take my Kevvie away, you know!"

"She did?"

"Yeah! But our love won through, just like it always does."

Daria was shocked at this. Kevin withstood Rachel's wiles? Wow, she thought. Maybe him and Brittany really are destined for each other. Well, they do go together like beefcake and silicone.

She sat down heavily on the bed and said, "Well, now what?"

"What do you mean, 'now what'? We're in trouble, Daria!"

"Um, I didn't drink any. But then, I got my own problem."

"What problem?"

"Everybody thinks I ratted them out!"

"Yeah, Daria, thanks a lot."

"But I didn't! I couldn't have, Brittany!"

"Why not?"

"Because I've been with you the whole time!"

Brittany paused and twirled her hair on her finger. "Oh yeah."

"You know that I was in this room for the whole party, and in the stands for the whole game. And before that, I couldn't have known about this."

"Well, that's a relief. I didn't think you were like mean and all,

just like, um, \_non-friendly\_."

"Gee, thanks. But can you really clear my name?"

"I don't know, Daria. I'm just a cheerleader. I'm like, popular, but not like, um, what's that word?"

"Respectable?"

"Um, I think so."

"So now I'm not only a Misery Chick, a Brain, and a suspected Lesbian\*, but a pariah as well?"

"You're \_Lesbian\_?" Brittany squealed, and hid her breasts, "Um, I said you could share my room, but like, not in \_that\_ way! Not that you should be like, kicked out or dis-crim-inated!" Daria had a hard time deciding whether to tell Brittany the truth or just let her squirm for a while.

"No, I'm \_not\_ a Lesbian, Brittany. And even if I was, I would probably be more into brunettes. With tattoos."

"Phew!"

\*\*\*\*

Time passed at the rate of a 85-year old in a Cadillac. Daria and Brittany laid on their respective beds and didn't exchange any words. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door, and Brittany opened it. Kevin was at the door with a worried look on his face.

"Hi, Babe. Coach's have searched all the rooms, now they're having a meeting. This really bites," he reported. Then he noticed Daria on the other side of the room. "Oh, hey, \_Dar\_ia."

"Uh, hi, \_Kev\_in."

"Dude, what's the big deal ratting us out? We were just trying to have some fun!"

"Kevin, I didn't do it. Who's been going around telling people that I did?"

"She's right, Kevvie!" squeaked Brittany, "She didn't do it, leave her alone!"

"What makes you so sure?"

"I've been with her! And I'm not going to let you be mean to her just because youâ€|thinkâ€|she did it!"

"Babe, all the guys said she narced on us!"

"But Kevvie, who are you going to believe? Your loving girlfriend, or a bunch of sweaty, hairy guys with no necks?!"

"Hey, some of them got necks!"

"That doesn't matter, Kevvie! Well, what's your answer?"

"Uhâ€¦could you repeat the question?"

"OOOHHH!!!" Brittany suddenly grabbed the ice bucket and dumped it over Kevin's head.

"Aaaahh!! Hey Babe, what was that for?! You could have likeâ€¦hyper-extended my sphincter!"

"HMPH!" Brittany took the ice off his head and put it back on the table, then slammed the door on Kevin.

Daria was watching this amusedly. "Well, that ought to gain me some support."

"I hope so!" said Brittany as she plopped back down on her bed.

Daria checked her watch, then grabbed the remote, pushed the power button, and did a little flipping before she found what she was looking for:

"Green-tinted corpses! Grief-stricken mothers! See the poor misguided youth who were pressured by their athletic peers and took their mothers' advice too seriously! The tragic cases of Vegetable Poisoning, next on Sick Sad World!!"

"Ewww," said Brittany, "you watch this show? I thought you were like, smart!"

Daria smiled and sat back against the headboard.

\* This isn't hinted on in the show, but I hinted on it in "My Dinner With Upchuck."

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## CHAPTER 8: Guilty Until Proven Innocent

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A while later, Brittany was called away on a meeting, and Daria was left alone at last. She pondered to herself what effect this would have on her reputation. On the one hand, she didn't have a reputation, or at least not a very widespread one that needed constant maintaining, like Quinn's. On the other hand, she had never really had people actually hate her before. Maybe some people had simmering resentment toward her because she was different from them, but no real hate. She thought about maybe putting up with pranks and abuse from the football players and football sympathizers (most of the rest of the school). But what really weighed on her mind was how Jane would handle it. Jane was a true-blue friend, but how far could that be strained? Would she applaud Daria for putting the screws on the football team, or would she chide her for being vindictive and cruel? After all, from what she could tell, Jane had a somewhat more loose attitude towards alcohol than Daria (She was an artist after all, reflected Daria, she'll probably end up drinking herself into oblivion some day). But all that was assuming that Jane wouldn't believe her side of the story. She would believe. Right?

When Sick Sad World ended, Daria decided that she needed to go for a walk. She went down the stairwell, looking for maybe an indoor swimming pool. She didn't have a bathing suit of course, but she thought that it might be nice to dip her toes in the water.

However, between the first and second floors, she found exactly what she didn't want to find. Namely, several football players. Justin Barnes was ahead of the pack, and spotted Daria.

"Hey, there she is!" They charged up the stairs after her. Daria went up a few stairs and pushed open the door to the second floor hall. Maybe they'll be less inclined to savage me if I'm within earshot of other guests, she thought. It was a long shot, but maybe it would work, and if it didn't, then she would head back to her room. Midway through the hall though, they surrounded her.

Justin was first with the charges. "Man, you're damn lucky that you're in a hotel, and that you happen to be a girl. If you were a guy, I swear to God I would kick your sorry ass so hard, you would feel it for weeks!"

Daria again fought to keep her cool. "Look, I know that I maybe wasn't the life of the party, but that doesn't mean I ratted on you! You don't have any proof! Who thinks they saw me?"

"I saw you coming back up the stairs before it happened!" said one of the defensive backs.

"Yeah, I was there too!" said another. Daria couldn't believe it. That had never happened. Daria knew about rumors, but she hadn't expected them to distort the truth in such a short time among such a large group of people.

"That's a lie! I was never in the stairwell!"

"Are you calling us liars?!"

"Is it that obvious?" Sarcasm was not wise at this point, but it was second nature to Daria.

"Hey!" said a linebacker, "How about you ask Casey Adams? He knows you did it! And he's getting his ass fined!"

Daria was running out of options quickly. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw Kevin, standing off to one side and not joining in the various yelling that was going on. She looked pleadingly in his direction. He stared back, his face shiny from nervous sweat. Daria put her hands out momentarily in a gesture of "Well?" Kevin looked back and forth between her and his teammates several times, and then said, "Wait a minute." Nobody looked at him. He looked around nervously again, then said it a little louder. Daria kept glancing at him as she tried to fend off the verbal attacks from the angry footballers. Finally, Kevin shouted at the top of his lungs (and with a somewhat embarrassing squeak), "HEY!!"

The side of the crowd closer to him turned their heads, and then the rest of them followed suit. Kevin found all eyes on him, and after an anxious pause, began to speak:

"Dudes, it wasn't her! I'm telling you, I know!"

"Really, Kevin?" said Justin, "What makes you so sure?"

"She was in Brit's room the whole time! Honest!"

"Oh, did \_Brit\_ tell you that?"

"Uhâ€|yeah. But I was there too! Yeah, now I remember! She was like, just sitting there!"

"I believe Kevin!" came an authoritative voice from the back of the crowd. It was Mack, who had arrived shortly after the ruckus started. "Daria wouldn't do something like that! She may not be all into school spirit and parties and all that, but she's not malicious! I think you guys are just looking for someone to blame!"

The crowd was unsure of what to say about this. Some of them were swayed, but some still looked at Daria uncertainly. The pregnant pause seemed to last for hours before someone suddenly shouted, "Hey, it's Casey!" Some of the footballers greeted him enthusiastically. Casey was walking slowly down the hall, seemingly unfazed by the attention.

"All right, Casey," said the defensive back, "Set this straight! Did this girl rat on us?"

Casey looked confused, even for his still fairly inebriated state. "Huh?"

"I said, did this Daria chick narc on us for the beer?"

Casey studied Daria for a second. "Oh, that Misery Chick. I saw her in the hall," he said matter-of-factly.

"When?"

"Uh, a while ago. Before the cops got here. She was chillin'."

"Yeah, but did she rat on us?!"

"Uhâ€|no. No, she didn't do it. No. She was just like, chillin' and stuff, you know, chillin' in da hallâ€|"

"What? But you said she did!"

"What? I must have been drunk of my ass!" He giggled at this.

"Actually," chimed in Mack, "All he said when he came into Brittany's room was, 'I bet it was that Misery Chick out there.' You all took it from there. Admit it, guys, you don't have a leg to stand on."

"Word up, Mack Daddy!" said Kevin.

"So just leave her alone, all right? We're in enough trouble already."

"Yeah," said Casey, "Leave the chick alone. She's just chillin', you

know, doin' the Misery thangâ€|"

The crowd dissolved back towards the stairwell. Only a couple people apologized to Daria, who was by then in a state of near catatonia.

"And one more thing," calledd Mack, "If anyone calls me 'Mack Daddy' again, I'll have the coach bust your ass down to J.V.!"

Daria chased after Kevin and Mack. "Hey, guys, uh, thanks a lot for saving me back there."

"Hey no prob," said Kevin. "I bet you'd do the same for me."

"Uhâ€|yeahâ€|of course I would."

"Hey," said Mack, "I wouldn't be much of a team captain if I couldn't control mob behavior now, would I?"

"I guess not. Well, I'll just head back to my room now. I'm not even supposed to be here, you know."

"Hey yeah, I thought it was odd that you are here, too."

"I guess I learned a valuable lesson from all this. 'Always make sure you're on the right bus.'"

"Yeah, we could all benefit from that."

"Uh-huh. See you guys later."

"Yeah, see ya, Daria."

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## CHAPTER 9: The Tidy Little Conclusion

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Daria got back to her room and flopped face-first on the bed. After a few seconds, she came up for air, and noticed that the phone on the bedside table was twisted sideways, and there was no cord coming out of it. She absent-mindedly got up, searched for the cord, and plugged the phone back in. A few seconds later, she jumped nearly a foot when the phone chose that moment to ring. She waited until the second ring and picked it up.

"Hello?"

"Daria!! Thank God it's you! Are you all right? Did they try to put the moves on you?! What was the final score?!" It was Jake, of course. Daria sighed.

"Uh, I'm fine, no, and twenty-something to something-something, Lawndale won. How come you're calling this late?"

"Why am I calling? Why, I've come to pick you up, of course!"

"Right now?"

"I'm on the outskirts of town, I should be there in five minutes! Maybe three. Actually, make it four! Four and a half, tops!"

"What about the meeting?"

"HA! What meeting? That guy was a nut! Besides that's not important! What's really important is family! No business deal or meeting should come between me and the well-being of my lovely healthy family whom I love so much!!"

"Uhâ€|Dad, maybe you should check the recommended dosage on your Prozac again."

"Ha ha! Keep the jokes coming, Daria, that's why I love you! That and you're my daughter! Well, time to hit the trail, see you in four and a half minutes!"

"Okay, bye."

\*\*\*\*

Well, looks like this crazy mixed up adventure might have a happy ending after all, thought Daria. Still, she couldn't help but wonder what had changed Casey's mind so quickly. And why he seemed so distant. Probably shouldn't ruin a good thing by overanalyzing it, thought Daria. But still she wonderedâ€|

Five minutes later, after Daria had run into Brittany on the way down and said her goodbyes, Jake pulled up to the lobby entrance.

"Climb in, kiddo! I would have been here sooner if it weren't for that damn manure truck-"

"It's okay, Dad. Thanks for picking me up."

"No problem, kiddo, not a problem at allâ€|"

Daria climbed into the front seat and shut the door, wanting little more than to just fall asleep and put this day behind her. But something distracted her. It was a female voice.

"Bye, Daria!" it said. Daria looked over in the direction that it came from, and saw Casey Adams standing there, but he obviously hadn't said it. The owner of the voice was standing behind him with her arms around his waist, and a couple strands of her long, unrealistically red hair falling over his shoulder.

Rachel waved at Daria as the car pulled out, and Daria did a double take in time to catch Rachel kiss Casey on the cheek. Casey's facial expression and little wave at Daria looked very akin to a young child riding on his mother's shoulders. Jake turned onto the main road.

Daria smiled reflexively, then frowned. Wait, she thought, this is not right. Totally not right. I mean, she's going toâ€|

Ah hell. The Lexus entered the freeway and Daria fell asleep.

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la la LA la laâ€|

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**\*\*NOTES:** **\*\***I realize that high school football teams, unless they travel a really long distance in their road games, probably don't stay overnight in a hotel. Still, I needed Daria in the situation that she found herself in, and as this show goes on, it's getting harder and harder to find ways to make Daria do things that she normally wouldn't.

This story was a tad self-indulgent, as it is based loosely on a similar incident from my own life. Rumors really do spread quickly, and they hurt innocent people. (screen goes blank, a shooting star appears with the words "The More You Know" on top)

I hope that no one got too attached to Rachel, because this is her last appearance. Unless you can come up with a good idea for a story to bring her back in. I felt that I needed to bring her back to wrap up the Kevin loose end from "Kitsune" since I spent an entire story tying up the Upchuck loose end. So I guess this story was just one big self-indulgent romp. Well, I hope you liked it anyway. I may use Rachel later on for an unrelated story, because I find the kitsune mythology to be very interesting (and I really dig foxes, they're soâ€|charming).

For this story, I assumed that Lawndale is in a state that's at least 300 miles wide, and with an east-west orientation. Ignore that. I don't care where Lawndale is any more than the Daria staff does.

Please send all questions, comments, constructive criticism, drooling fanboy-ism, naughty letters and soufflÃ© recipes to [reyfox@netscape.net](mailto:reyfox@netscape.net) Thank you, and good night.

End  
file.